



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

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Montana Department of Commerce Launches Website for Technology Businesses

(HELENA) – Today the Montana Department of Commerce announced the launch of its **Big Sky Innovation** website www.bigskyinnovation.org a new resource to help meet the needs of the state's rapidly growing technology business sector. The website is designed specifically to deliver helpful information and resources to anyone engaged in developing innovative technology. Major target audiences include technology entrepreneurs, owners of existing technology companies, university-system, nonprofit, and private sector researchers, and the many economic developers throughout the state who work with these firms.

"Montana's on the move with a flourishing high tech industry," said Governor Brian Schweitzer. "The **Big Sky Innovation** web site is a remarkable resource that will help our technology business sector connect and continue to grow, further strengthening Montana's economy."

Big Sky Innovation is a joint project between the Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Technology Innovation Partnership Program and The University of Montana's School of Business Administration (SOBA), with additional support from the Governor's Office on Economic Development, The University of Montana's National Science Foundation Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), and the U.S. Small Business Administration. All five partners are contributing funds to the project, and SOBA has further committed staff and students to keep the site's information and resources fresh and up-to-date.

"Many small, vibrant technology-based businesses are making major contributions in Montana, by creating more higher-paying jobs, and expanding Montana's tax base," said Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite. "The **Big Sky Innovation** website serves as a central resource for these firms to find information and resources that can help them move forward with their technologies."

SOBA's Dean, Dr. Larry Gianchetta, is excited for the SOBA to have the critical role of developing and maintaining the site. "This new website is a perfect complement to the entrepreneurship and technology business courses now available through the School of Business Administration," Gianchetta said. "We see it opening more and more opportunities for business students throughout the state to work hand-in-hand with growing technology-based businesses."

Users of the site will find in-depth information and publications on the basics of innovation and invention, developing new product concepts, intellectual property protection, market research, and most importantly, commercialization. **Big Sky Innovation** also offers the largest collection of local, state, and federal resources ever compiled for Montana's business community. These resources are available to provide technology-related assistance, business assistance, intellectual property and commercialization assistance, and financial assistance. The site also provides links to the technology transfer offices of various units of the Montana University System, where users can see what technologies are available for licensing and learn what their next steps should be to take advantage of these opportunities. Finally, **Big Sky Innovation** maintains a calendar of events relevant to technology businesses, including workshops and conferences taking place both in-state and throughout the country.

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